



STOUGHTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

2023 - 2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



Adopted 05/17/2023 by the Library Board of Trustees

INTRODUCTION

This strategic plan was drafted by the Planning Committee of the Stoughton Public Library Board and adopted by the full Board of Trustees in April of 2023. It is a revision of the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan adopted by the Board in October of 2019, which was itself a significant reworking of the 2015-2018 plan adopted by the Board in 2017.

In crafting this plan, the Committee utilized several types of input, including a community survey in 2018 and a series of focus groups held in 2019. Library staff were also surveyed in 2022 regarding future service priorities, and many of their suggestions are incorporated into this document. Library Director Jim Ramsey reviewed multiple drafts of the plan with the Library's Management Team—Robin Behringer, Amanda Bosky, Sarah Bukrey, and Mary Ostrander—throughout 2022 and 2023.

The City of Stoughton's creation of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) taskforce in the spring of 2022, as well as the anticipated hiring of a project manager in 2023 to oversee DEI efforts in the city, reflected sentiments expressed in the community survey and focus groups regarding the importance of DEI issues. As a result, issues relating to DEI were top of mind in the creation of this plan.

BACKGROUND

Stoughton is a growing community, as evidenced by the robust development occurring throughout the city. In recent years, city leadership has made attracting young adults and families to our community a top priority. In 2020, the Stoughton Area School District sponsored a study entitled *Gaining and Maintaining Young Adults and Young Families in Stoughton, Wisconsin*. The study identified lack of affordable housing, among other factors, as a key barrier to attracting the young families needed to sustain our community. A slower pace of development relative to surrounding communities was further identified as a factor hindering growth in our school district and community as a whole.

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Increases in library programs and services for young people and their families will be important for attracting new residents with school-aged children to our community. Likewise, as the community grows and gains more young adults and their families, our services must expand to meet the needs of these populations. Meeting the educational needs of young people in our community remains a key part of our mission. To this end, our staff will continue to collaborate closely with the Stoughton Area School District to provide early literacy and learning opportunities for all ages.

Much progress has been made here in Stoughton in recent years toward smart, sustainable growth. In 2022-2023, the city experienced a growth in net new construction of 2.43 percent, one of the largest increases in well over a decade, and just shy of the Dane County average of 2.52 percent. Kettle Park West and 51 West, two new developments on the northwestern edge of the city, are set to provide the kind of housing the community needs to grow.

In the years to come, the riverfront redevelopment project promises to bring more density and activity to the downtown area. The proposed whitewater park on the Yahara River will also increase the number of visitors to the downtown area. As the community grows in the coming years, demand for library services will also increase.

Exploring the need for a larger physical space will be a top priority for our organization in the years to come. Our current 16,000 square foot facility is inadequate to meet the growing demands of our community for programming, meeting, and activity spaces. When our building was remodeled and expanded over three decades ago, library use was still largely transactional in nature: patrons came to the library to check out materials or to seek information; the space simply was not designed with collaboration and active learning in mind.

The need for additional staffing is another theme running through this strategic plan. Whereas the library of the past offered exclusively transactional services like check-outs and answers to reference inquiries, the 21st century library is a place for experiential learning and community building. The library of the past was a place to find a book and a quiet place to read or study; today's library is a place to explore, interact, and discover. Key to this transition has been the growth of library programming over the past two decades. In 2002, the Library offered 64 programs to 2,500 attendees. Last year, we offered 329 programs to 7,661 attendees, an increase of over 500 and 300 percent, respectively. Library programming requires enormous amounts of staff time, not only for the events themselves, but for their design, planning, and evaluation.

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC



The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted the way libraries around the world served their communities. Beginning in the early days of the pandemic, our institution, like so many others, adapted our services to fit the new reality. The two most visible adaptations were curbside delivery of library materials and virtual programming.

Some pandemic adaptations, such as curbside delivery, turned out to be temporary. Others, such as virtual programs and hybrid meetings, will likely endure. The pandemic accelerated already established technological trends,

most notably the prevalence of streaming services and the importance of virtual platforms for remote work and learning. Changes in how people consume media have led libraries to invest in digital streaming platforms to deliver audiovisual content. At the same time, print materials will continue to form the core of our collection, especially for certain populations who lack access to digital platforms or who simply prefer the printed word.

For years, public libraries have been touted as the “community’s living room,” a third space outside of home, work, and school, where **people gather to forge the kind of connections that transform a city into a true community.**

One question raised is how the pandemic will have changed our society’s relationship with public space. For years, public libraries have been touted as the “community’s living room,” a third space outside of home, work, and school, where people gather to forge the kind of connections that transform a city into a true community. The pandemic upended this role, though thankfully only temporarily.

We drafted this plan in the third year of the ongoing pandemic. Without knowing precisely what the future holds, we have incorporated many of the changes wrought by COVID-19 into our strategic planning. The challenge for libraries, as for so many other educational and cultural institutions, is how to continue to serve the community in both virtual and in-person environments, and to do it with limited resources. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that “flexibility” and “adaptation” will remain watchwords in the years to come.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Stoughton Public Library will support the education, enrichment, empowerment, and engagement of our community. We are a place for everyone to learn, discover, grow, and play.

The Stoughton Public Library follows the values of our profession as set forth by the American Library Association (ALA). These values include diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, social responsibility, and lifelong learning.

The Staff and Board of Trustees of the Stoughton Public Library join the ALA and the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) in declaring that we stand against hate and systemic injustice in all forms. We believe every life is valuable and that all people should be treated with respect and dignity. We reject policies and practices that promote discrimination and work to provide a library collection that reflects a broad spectrum of the human experience. We strive to provide a free, safe, and welcoming environment for people to explore ideas that differ from their own and gain new knowledge and skills. All Are Welcome Here.

GOAL AREA 1: Access to information

The Library will provide free and open access to a wide variety of information in both traditional print and emerging digital formats. Recognizing that demand for digital and streaming services is increasing rapidly, we will invest additional resources in those services in the years to come.



Since access depends on the public knowing about library resources, we will utilize a variety of marketing platforms (e.g., Facebook, website, email) and relationships with local businesses and organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Senior Center, SASD, etc.) to publicize our resources.

Further, access to information, in both print and digital forms, depends on adequate staffing, as we note in greater detail in GOAL AREA 5.

The Library will strive to represent in its collections the full diversity of the human experience. The Library affirms in the strongest possible terms the principles of intellectual freedom enshrined in the [Library Bill of Rights](#)¹ and the [ALA Freedom To Read statement](#).²

Action/Initiative 1:

In order to maintain a robust collection and keep pace with rising costs, the Library will increase expenditures on physical materials by a minimum of 3 percent year over year.

Action/Initiative 2:

In order to adapt to increasing demand for digital content, the Library will increase expenditures on digital e-resources by at least 8 percent over the next three annual budgets.

Action/Initiative 3:

The Library will take steps to conduct a diversity audit of its collection with the goal of completing the audit by the end of 2025.

GOAL AREA 2: Programming



The Library will offer a wide variety of programs for all ages, both in-person and virtual/hybrid, to meet the diverse needs of the community and promote the concept of the library as a community hub for

lifelong learning and engagement. We strive to reach the widest possible audience with our programs. To this end, we will utilize a variety of marketing platforms (e.g., Facebook, website, email) and relationships with local

¹ <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>

² <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement>

businesses and organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Senior Center, SASD, etc.) to publicize our services. We are open to pursuing additional avenues for marketing our programs, and are always investigating new opportunities to communicate with our patrons.

Adequate staffing being essential to the provision of library programming, the Library will pursue increased staffing levels to allow expansion of programming for all ages.

Action/Initiative 1:

Our programming librarians will offer at least four programs per year that focus on diversity in our community and/or explore the experiences of marginalized or under-represented groups.

Action/Initiative 2:

Library administration and the Board of Trustees will advocate for the addition in the 2024 operating budget of a 22 hour/week Library Assistant in Adult Services to allow for additional programs for adults and teens.

Action/Initiative 3:

In order to increase the programming and outreach offerings and reach a wider audience, the Library will increase its programming budget by 5 percent annually.

GOAL AREA 3: The Library's physical space

The Library will maintain and strengthen its role as a safe, inclusive, and accessible space welcoming to all, in which individuals and groups interact, exchange ideas, and



foster a sense of community. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we aim to reestablish the library as a destination. We will continue to explore creative uses for our space and plan for a future expansion. We will use various forms of

media and relationships with community businesses and organizations to inform the public of these steps.

Action/Initiative 1:

Complete the renovation of the children's area begun in 2022 by July of 2023, including identifying additional furniture and fixtures to be updated, (e.g., the area around the children's service desk.)

Action/Initiative 2:

Complete improvements to the vacant lot at 216 E Jefferson Street by the end of 2023 to create a permanent, library-adjacent venue for outdoor programming.



Action/Initiative 3:

Complete an engineering study of the Library's heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system in 2023 and replace the system in 2024. Special attention will be given to ventilation and indoor air quality in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Action/Initiative 4:

Undertake a space needs study before the end of 2025 to examine the potential for expansion of the current building. The study will incorporate accessibility guidelines from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's [Inclusive Services Assessment and Guide for Public Libraries](#) (2019).³

GOAL AREA 4: Financial stability

The Library will work to ensure financial stability through municipal and county appropriation, utilizing a variety of marketing platforms, to ensure that community members are aware of the Library's needs, which will promote private donations, gifts, grants and other fundraising efforts.

Action/Initiative 1:

Work with Dane County Library Service to ensure a fair and equitable county funding formula that reflects the true value libraries provide to their communities.

Action/Initiative 2:

Secure at least \$65,000 in designated gift funds in 2023 and aim to increase that amount by 5 percent annually.

³ <https://dpi.wi.gov/libraries/public-libraries/inclusive-services>

GOAL AREA 5: Staff

As noted throughout, the Library relies on the time and expertise of its staff in order to meet the goals outlined here. As such, the Library will prioritize staff retention. The Library will also pursue increased staffing levels to maintain efficient operations, expand programming for all ages, and pursue initiatives related to collection preservation and maintenance. Increased staffing is critical for a more equitable and sustainable distribution of tasks, staff's professional growth and development, and for the Library to retain the workers we are fortunate to have.



Action/Initiative 1:

In future operating budgets, Library administration and the Board of Trustees will advocate for the addition of a 22 hour/week Library Assistant in Adult Services to provide additional programs for adults and teens. This initiative is also stated in GOAL AREA 2: Programming.

Action/Initiative 2:

In future operating budgets, advocate for the addition of 10 hours to the Library's Circulation Supervisor position.

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Stoughton Public Library Board of Trustees considers this strategic plan an important tool for communicating with our stakeholders and our community at large. Throughout this document, we have endeavored to identify opportunities and priorities for library programs and services over the next three years. But communication does not end with the publication of this plan, and words must be accompanied by action. In order to be effective, implementation and communication must be ongoing processes.

The Library Board of Trustees commits to reviewing this strategic plan annually and reporting progress toward the action and initiatives under each goal area. The Library Director and the Chair of the Planning Committee will deliver this report to the Library Board of Trustees at the regular monthly meeting of the Board in January of each year. Community stakeholders and members of the public will be invited to attend this meeting. We will leverage additional modes of communication as well (e.g., social media, email newsletter, infographics, displays, etc.)

As necessary, the Library Board may, in consultation with the Library Director and Library staff, revise benchmarks identified in these actions and initiatives depending on current resources and capacities. This plan is designed to be a living document to guide the Library through the next three years of growth and change.





<https://www.stoughtonpubliclibrary.org/>